

## **Davis salutes award winners: Riverside County and Palm Desert win praise for their environmental and economic leadership.**

Laurie Koch Thrower  
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**Riverside County** and the city of Palm Desert are this year's recipients of the 2000 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award, honoring environmental programs.

The award, administered by the state Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency, is touted by the state as its "highest and most prestigious award."

The county earned the award for its "integrated project," an ambitious plan to create a blueprint for new roads, housing and wildlife preserves.

Palm Desert was chosen for its environmental stewardship program, which includes acquiring land for open space, establishing drought-tolerant landscaping, requiring compressed natural gas-fueled trash trucks and buses, participating in the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy and donating land to the Bureau of Land Management.

"The awards this year once again prove that California is leading the world in innovative environmental solutions," Gov. Davis said. "This year's recipients also show that employing exemplary practices and imaginative approaches to protecting the state's natural resources and environment also promote significant economic benefits."

The awards were presented Monday in Sacramento.

**Riverside County** officials and citizens, panels are working to carve out enough land to handle new growth while setting aside space to harbor imperiled plants and animals. The goal is to plan for the entire region and avoid piecemeal land-use decisions. The region's Population is expected to double to 3 million in the next 20 years or so.

The county is about halfway through a three-year, \$29 million process of mapping for roads, wildlife areas and new housing.

By weaving together plans for the often conflicting uses, **Riverside County** has caught the eye of national leaders, said Stanley Young, spokesperson for the Resources Agency.

"I think it's precedent-setting," Young said. "It's pioneering."

The award does not come with a check, but it could give **Riverside County** a boost as it seeks state and federal money for its planning work, county officials said.

"It's a real signal to all the state agencies and legislators in other areas of the state that it is a project that's worthy of great merit," said Supervisor Bob Buster, who was in Sacramento on Monday to receive the award for the county.

Nine agencies, companies and organizations were honored in four categories this year, said Andrea Lewis, spokeswoman with the Environmental Protection Agency.